



# Developing a Winning Proposal

Presented to:

**DoN Office of Small Business  
Programs Gold Coast Conference**

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# If You Remember Nothing Else...

- ▼ Read the solicitation – all of it (even the boring parts)
- ▼ Reread the solicitation – all of it - again
- ▼ If you have any questions – ask (BEFORE the solicitation closes), don't assume
- ▼ Prepare your proposal
- ▼ Have someone (not the preparer) check the proposal against the solicitation requirements
- ▼ Submit your proposal ON TIME



# Uniform Contract Format (and what it means)

- ▼ Part I -- The Schedule (becomes part of the contract)
  - Section A - Solicitation/contract form (cover page)
  - Section B - Supplies or services and prices/costs (CLINs and SLINs – what/how many/how much)
  - Section C - Description/specifications/statement of work (describes/defines the what)
  - Section D - Packaging and marking (how to pack/box)
  - Section E - Inspection and acceptance (who and where)
  - Section F - Deliveries or performance (when/how long/where)
  - Section G - Contract administration data
  - Section H - Special contract requirements
- ▼ Part II -- Contract Clauses (becomes part of the contract)
  - Section I - Contract clauses (the most boring – but very important – part of the contract)
- ▼ Part III -- List of Documents, Exhibits, and Other Attachments (becomes part of the contract)
  - Section J - List of attachments (Specification, SOW, SOO, CDRL, DD254, etc.)



# Uniform Contract Format (and what it means) (cont'd)

- ▼ Part IV -- Representations and Instructions (does NOT become a part of the contract BUT does request and/or provide the information that can help or hinder your getting a contract award)
  - Section K - Representations, certifications, and other statements of offerors or respondents (read very carefully - some of these carry legal penalties if you miscertify)
    - Offerors are now required to complete the Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA) in lieu of paper representations and certifications. The application is located at <https://orca.bpn.gov/>.
    - In order to receive a contract award, all offerors must be registered in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR). This application is located at <https://www.bpn.gov/ccr/> (registration must be updated annually).
  - Section L - Instructions, conditions, and notices to offerors or respondents (what to put into your proposal and where – can you follow directions?)
  - Section M - Evaluation factors for award (the grading system – what you need to demonstrate to win)

# First Steps/Decisions

## ▼ Read Sections B & C

- Is this a market area that I am in (or want to get into)?
- Should I propose as a prime contractor or as a subcontractor?
- If I want to be a prime, can I do it all myself or do I need to find others to round out my team?
- If I want to be a subcontractor, how do I identify others who are planning to propose and position myself as a part of their team?

## ▼ Can I meet all the specification requirements?

## ▼ Can I deliver on time in the quantities specified?

## ▼ Can I put together a quality proposal in the time specified?



# Understand the Groundrules

- ▼ Federal regulations require the acquiring activity to inform all offerors of the criteria, and their relative importance, that will be used to evaluate proposals (Section M)
- ▼ Government evaluators may only evaluate the proposal against the criteria listed in Section M
- ▼ Government evaluators may only evaluate a proposal using the information provided within the proposal itself
  - The only exception is information relating to past performance



# Understand the “Grading System”

## ▼ Read Section M very carefully

- It contains the criteria that will be used to evaluate your proposal
- It specifies the relative importance of those criteria (e.g., cost or price to the Government must be evaluated as a part of every source selection but it may be more or less important than non-cost criteria)
- It (frequently) provides information on how the criteria will be rated (per a DoD Memorandum issued on 4 March 2011, these ratings will be standardized for all RFPs using FAR Part 15 procedures issued after 1 July 2011 )

## ▼ Use this information when deciding where and how to focus the efforts of your proposal writing team





# Department of Defense Source Selection Procedures

- ▼ New guidance issued on 4 March 2011
- ▼ Effective for all RFPs issued on and after 1 July 2011
- ▼ Designed to provide uniform source selection guidance within the DoD and to simplify the source selection process
- ▼ Requires use of standardized rating criteria and descriptions for “technical” and “past performance” factors and
- ▼ Requires that a Source Selection Advisory Council (SSAC) be appointed for all acquisitions in excess of \$100M

# Follow the Instructions

- ▼ Section L tells you how the Government expects you to put your proposal together (e.g., how many volumes, what to put into those volumes, how many pages, etc.)
  - This is not the time to get creative – if information is requested in Section 1 of Volume 2, put it there (or at least provide a cross reference to where you DID put it) - don't make the evaluator have to hunt for information
  - Ensure that you complied with any page limitations - Government evaluators are not allowed to review any pages in excess of the limitation and PCOs frequently remove these pages before giving them to the technical evaluators to ensure they are not reviewed



# Writing Your Proposal

- ▼ Determine who is going to write the proposal (an individual, a team?)
- ▼ Ensure that everyone involved with the proposal understands the requirements, the evaluation factors and the proposal instructions
  - If you are unsure of something in the solicitation, get clarification, in writing, from the PCO BEFORE the solicitation closes
- ▼ Decide how you are going to allocate time and resources (use the evaluation criteria as your guide)
- ▼ Put your best effort forward the first time – never assume that you will be given an opportunity to have discussions/fine tune your proposal
  - Taking exception/putting conditions on your proposal is a risky business and may make your proposal unacceptable – if you have issues with the RFP, try to get them resolved with the PCO BEFORE the solicitation closes

# Writing Your Proposal (cont'd)

- ▼ 100 words that kill your proposals (taken from an article written by Bob Lohfeld and published on July 20, 2012 in [http://washingtontechnology.com/articles/2012/07/20/insights-lohfeld-words-proposal.aspx?s=wtdaily\\_260712](http://washingtontechnology.com/articles/2012/07/20/insights-lohfeld-words-proposal.aspx?s=wtdaily_260712))

- **Crutch words**

- When writers don't know what to say, they often use crutch words to make the reader think they know what they are writing about. For example, when a proposal writer says, "We understand your requirements," then fails to demonstrate any understanding, the writer is using the word *understand* as a crutch.

- **Boasting Words**

- Boasting words cause a proposal to lose credibility and undermine the integrity of the bidder. I know every 10-person company feels compelled to say they are *world class*, *uniquely qualified*, *use best-of-breed tools*, *have industry-standard processes*, *have state-of-the-art technology*, and are *thought leaders in their market*.

# Writing Your Proposal (cont'd)

- **Vague, useless words**

- No proposal evaluator has ever been moved by a proposal that said *we are pleased to submit this proposal, enthusiastic about performing this work, committed to top quality, or we place our customers first*. These are just useless words in a proposal. You will do better if you strip these from your proposal, and write about what matters—which is *how* you are going to do the work.

- **Weak, timid words**

- *We believe, think, feel, strive, attempt, intend*, etc. are all words that contemplate failure to perform as an acceptable outcome. Say what you intend to do, and don't couch it in timid terms.

- **Redundant words**

- In page-limited proposals, concise writing is mandatory. Let's make it a practice to replace redundant words with precise words. For example, replace *actual experience* with *experience*, *advanced planning* with *planning*, *close proximity* with *proximity*, *consensus of opinion* with *consensus*, and so on.

# Writing Your Proposal (cont'd)

- **Unnecessary qualifiers**

- *We are absolutely certain, it goes without saying, now and again, comparatively, thoroughly, needless to say, etc.* are unnecessary qualifiers. While these words and many similar words may have a place in proposals, most writers use them as unnecessary qualifiers. Remove them to make your writing more concise.

- **Needlessly long words**

- Normally, you wouldn't use unnecessarily long words in conversation, so there's no need to use them in a proposal. Replace *ascertain* with *learn*, *encompass* with *include*, *enumerate* with *list*, *illustrate* with *show*, *initiate* with *start*, and so on.

- **Slang**

- *We are hitting the ground running and rolling out the red carpet with seasoned managers...* You might say this in conversation and it would be fine, but in a proposal, it just sounds odd. Proposals are more formal and may even end up being part of the contract, so write without using slang.



# Writing Your Proposal (cont'd)

- ▼ Ensure that your cost/price proposal is consistent with your technical proposal
  - This admonition is particularly important for any cost type contract where the Contracting Officer must assess whether your cost proposal is a REALISTIC representation of your technical approach
- ▼ Have someone who was not involved with writing/assembling the proposal review it against the solicitation to ensure that ALL of the requirements of the solicitation were addressed and/or followed
  - Your proposal is a reflection of the quality of work that can be expected from you and, therefore, it is also very important that your proposal be proofread to ensure that it is free of grammatical and typographical errors.
- ▼ Ensure your proposal is signed and that it includes an acknowledgement of the receipt and acceptance of all the solicitation amendments
- ▼ Make sure your proposal is submitted ON TIME
  - A late proposal, with rare exceptions, may not be evaluated



# After the Award Decision

## ▼ Request a debriefing

- To ensure that you get a debriefing, it must be requested, in writing, within 3 days of being notified of the award decision

## ▼ Debriefings can be a learning opportunity

- Solicit information on what you can improve for next time





# The Debriefing

- ▼ FAR Part 15.506 states that the debriefing information shall include:
- The Government's evaluation of the significant weaknesses or deficiencies in the offeror's proposal, if applicable;
  - The overall evaluated cost or price and technical rating, if applicable, of the successful offeror and the debriefed offeror, and past performance information on the debriefed offeror;
  - The overall ranking of all offerors, when any ranking was developed by the agency during the source selection;
  - A summary of the rationale for award;
  - For acquisitions of commercial items, the make and model of the item to be delivered by the successful offeror; and
  - Reasonable responses to relevant questions about whether source selection procedures contained in the solicitation, applicable regulations, and other applicable authorities were followed



## The Debriefing (cont'd)

- ▼ The debriefing shall not include point-by-point comparisons of the debriefed offeror's proposal with those of other offerors. Moreover, the debriefing shall not reveal any information prohibited from disclosure by FAR 24.202 or exempt from release under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552) including --
  - Trade secrets;
  - Privileged or confidential manufacturing processes and techniques;
  - Commercial and financial information that is privileged or confidential, including cost breakdowns, profit, indirect cost rates, and similar information; and
  - The names of individuals providing reference information about an offeror's past performance.



# E-commerce at SPAWAR

- ▼ The SPAWAR e-commerce homepage has links to the following:
- SPAWAR Small Business Office
  - E-Commerce News
  - Links to Other Sites of Interest (e.g., Navy Electronic Commerce Online (NECO), Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA), SPAWAR Home Page)
  - SPAWAR Claimancy-Wide Business Opportunities



# SPAWAR Business Opportunity Page (BOP)

- ▼ Lists all business opportunities within the SPAWAR claimancy
  - Headquarters
  - System Center Pacific (SSC-PAC)
  - System Center Atlantic (SSC-LANT)
- ▼ Opportunities sorted by acquisition phase
  - Future Opportunities - potential requirements, draft documents
  - Open Solicitations - requirements currently in the solicitation and award process
  - Awarded contracts - recently awarded contracts that may have potential subcontracting opportunities



# BOP Subscription Service

- ▼ Provides electronic notification of actions posted on the BOP
- ▼ Contractors subscribe to specific FBO/FSC categories
  - Contractors may subscribe to all or any subset of the listed codes
- ▼ ***Replaces paper (manual) bidders lists within the SPAWAR claimancy***

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# e-Commerce

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CONTRACTS  
DIRECTORATE  
OFFICE

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**A Message from our Commander**

"As the Navy's C4I experts, we listen to our customers and find the right solutions for their C4I challenges. In response, we emphasize providing information solutions versus just information systems." [Read more](#)

**Self-Service Password Reset now available**

We have implemented a new feature on the e-Commerce Central website to allow users who have lost their password to reset it via an automated function without having to contact the SPAWAR Paperless Helpdesk. This feature is available under the i-Services section of the left navigation section of the site, and also from the following link: [e-CC Self-Service](#)

**News**

**NEW** [The 23rd Annual Navy Gold Coast Small Business Opportunity Conference](#)

[Information on Submitting your Electronic Proposal, Market Survey Response and Electronic Unsolicited Proposals..](#)

[Other News...](#)

**Recently Issued**

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <a href="#">N00039-11-R-0084</a> | Exhibit Support Services Pre-Solicitation Synopsis and Industry Day Announcement |
| <a href="#">N66001-11-T-7500</a> | FRAMES   |
| <a href="#">N66001-11-T-5959</a> | HIGH SPEED ENCRYPTORS  |
| <a href="#">N66001-11-T-7389</a> | Sea Lions Transport Cages & Assembly   |

**Closing Soon**

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|----------------------------------|---|
| <a href="#">N66001-11-T-5765</a> | HP COMPUTER MOBILE WORKSTATION & SOFTWARE                   |
| <a href="#">N66001-11-T-7389</a> | Sea Lions Transport Cages & Assembly                        |
| <a href="#">N65236-08-R-0153</a> | C4ISR Tactical Vehicle Engineering and Prototyping Services |
| <a href="#">N66001-11-T-5959</a> | HIGH SPEED ENCRYPTORS                                       |
| <a href="#">N66001-11-T-7500</a> | FRAMES  |

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## SPAWAR CONTRACTING PROCESS

jump to...

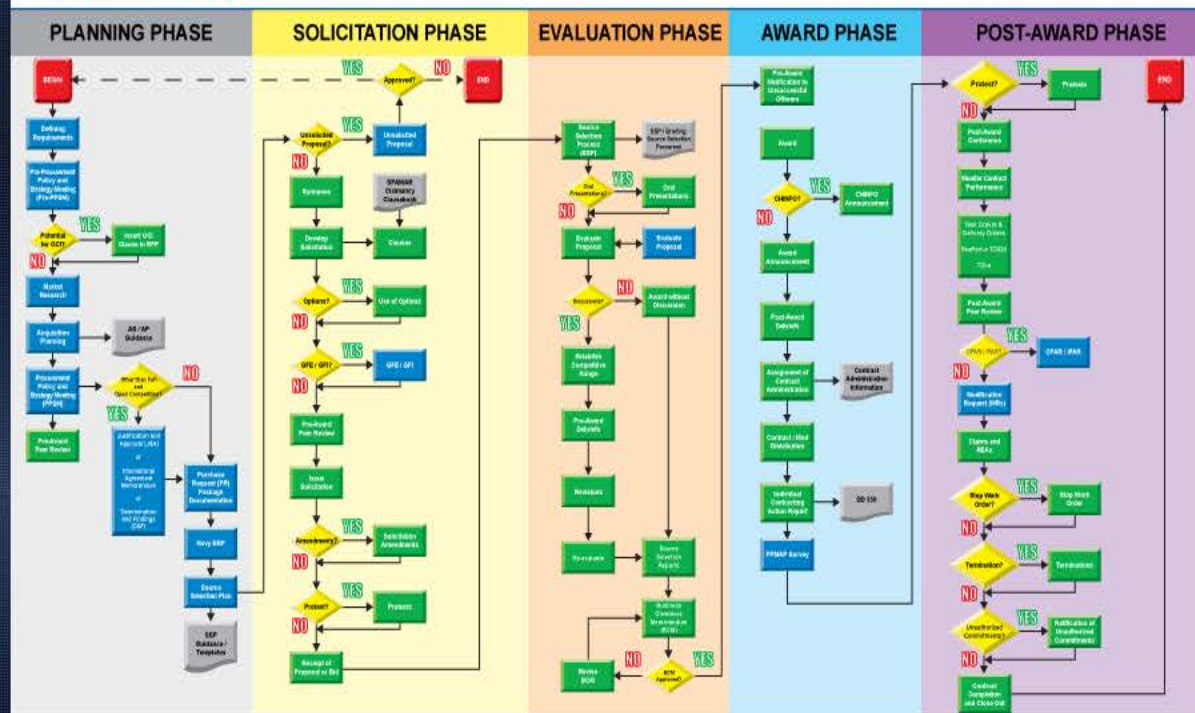
Planning

Solicitation

Evaluation

Award

Post Award

Click [HERE](#) to enlarge the Flowchart





# Points of Contact/Resources

- Diane Thornewell 619-524-6378 [diane.thornewell@navy.mil](mailto:diane.thornewell@navy.mil)
- Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/>
- FAR/DFAR/Service Regulations <http://farsite.hill.af.mil/>
- Defense Acquisition Guidebook (DoD 5000)  
<https://dag.dau.mil/Pages/Default.aspx>
- SEAPORT <http://www.seaport.navy.mil/>
- SPAWAR E-commerce Central  
<https://e-commerce.sscno.nmci.navy.mil/command/02/acq/navhome.nsf/homepage?readform>
- SPAWAR Contract Management Process Guide  
[http://enterprise.spawar.navy.mil/cmpg/public\\_cmpg\\_index.htm](http://enterprise.spawar.navy.mil/cmpg/public_cmpg_index.htm)
- DoD Source Selection Procedures (March 4, 2011)  
<https://dap.dau.mil/policy/Lists/Policy%20Documents/Attachments/3268/SourceSelectionProcedures.pdf>
- 100 words that kill your proposal  
<http://www.lohfeldconsulting.com/news-knowledge/2012/06/100-words-to-avoid-in-proposals/>



# Questions

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# Back-Up Slides

# Combined Technical/Risk Rating

| Color         | Rating       | Description   |
|---------------|--------------|---|
| <b>Blue</b>   | Outstanding  | Proposal meets requirements and indicates an exceptional approach and understanding of the requirements. Strengths far outweigh any weaknesses. Risk of unsuccessful performance is very low.   |
| <b>Purple</b> | Good         | Proposal meets requirements and indicates a thorough approach and understanding of the requirements. Proposal contains strengths which outweigh any weaknesses. Risk of unsuccessful performance is low.  |
| <b>Green</b>  | Acceptable   | Proposal meets requirements and indicates an adequate approach and understanding of the requirements. Strengths and weaknesses are offsetting or will have little or no impact on contract performance. Risk of unsuccessful performance is no worse than moderate. |
| <b>Yellow</b> | Marginal     | Proposal does not clearly meet requirements and has not demonstrated an adequate approach and understanding of the requirements. The proposal has one or more weaknesses which are not offset by strengths. Risk of unsuccessful performance is high.               |
| <b>Red</b>    | Unacceptable | Proposal does not meet requirements and contains one or more deficiencies. Proposal is unawardable.   |

# Separate Technical/Risk Rating Process

| Color         | Rating       | Description  |
|---------------|--------------|--|
| <b>Blue</b>   | Outstanding  | Proposal meets requirements and indicates an exceptional approach and understanding of the requirements. The proposal contains multiple strengths and no deficiencies. |
| <b>Purple</b> | Good         | Proposal meets requirements and indicates a thorough approach and understanding of the requirements. Proposal contains at least one strength and no deficiencies.      |
| <b>Green</b>  | Acceptable   | Proposal meets requirements and indicates an adequate approach and understanding of the requirements. Proposal has no strengths or deficiencies.                       |
| <b>Yellow</b> | Marginal     | Proposal does not clearly meet requirements and has not demonstrated an adequate approach and understanding of the requirements.                                       |
| <b>Red</b>    | Unacceptable | Proposal does not meet requirements and contains one or more deficiencies and is unawardable.  |

| Rating   | Description   |
|----------|---|
| Low      | Has little potential to cause disruption of schedule, increased cost or degradation of performance. Normal contractor effort and normal Government monitoring will likely be able to overcome any difficulties.       |
| Moderate | Can potentially cause disruption of schedule, increased cost or degradation of performance. Special contractor emphasis and close Government monitoring will likely be able to overcome difficulties.                 |
| High     | Is likely to cause significant disruption of schedule, increased cost or degradation of performance. Is unlikely to overcome any difficulties, even with special contractor emphasis and close Government monitoring. |



# 15.208 -- Submission, Modification, Revision, and Withdrawal of Proposals

- (b) (1) Any proposal, modification, or revision, that is received at the designated Government office after the exact time specified for receipt of proposals is “late” and will not be considered unless it is received before award is made, the contracting officer determines that accepting the late proposal would not unduly delay the acquisition ; and—
  - (i) If it was transmitted through an electronic commerce method authorized by the solicitation, it was received at the initial point of entry to the Government infrastructure not later than 5:00 p.m. one working day **prior** to the date specified for receipt of proposals; or
  - (ii) There is acceptable evidence to establish that it was received at the Government installation designated for receipt of proposals and was under the Government’s control prior to the time set for receipt of proposals; or
  - (iii) It was the only proposal received.
- (2) However, a late modification of an otherwise successful proposal, that makes its terms more favorable to the Government, will be considered at any time it is received and may be accepted.